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National Secretary-Treasurer

J. David Cox, Sr.
National President

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May 12, 2016

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Speaker Ryan, Majority Leader McConnell, Leader Pelosi, and Leader Reid:

On behalf of the over 42,000 Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) at our nation's airports who are represented by the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE), I strongly urge the swift introduction and passage of an emergency supplemental appropriations bill to provide stable, long-term funding to adequately staff screening operations at our nation's airports. Specifically, this legislation should provide the funding needed to hire 6,000 full-time TSOs. These additional TSOs will at least begin to address the shortage of TSOs needed to reduce the delays passengers are facing in airports across the country. As the workers tasked with the duty of screening passengers and baggage under the Aviation and Transportation Security Act (ATSA) Public Law 107-71, TSOs have borne the brunt of failures of both the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and Congress to react to increasing passenger flows and request staffing increases accordingly and to appropriate the funding necessary for that staff.

AFGE disagrees with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Johnson's proposal to "collaborate with airports and airlines to support non-security screening operations, such as returning bins to the front of waiting lines" as described in his joint press release with TSA Administrator Neffenger on May 4, 2016. The decision to reprogram \$34 million in funding to pay overtime and accelerate the hiring of addition TSOs, while providing a small amount of temporary relief for travelers, defers crucial funding that currently is necessary.

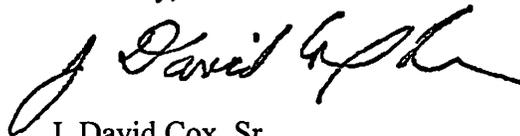


TSA has failed to address chronic understaffing at airports for years. Until recently, TSA staffing was at its lowest level in 5 years, even though the number of passengers on U.S. flights increased by 15 percent. TSA's predicted efficiencies through the PreCheck program failed to materialize. TSOs are working hard to implement more effective screening procedures that, when combined with increased passenger flows and packed carry-on luggage, have stretched the TSO workforce to its limits. Congress is directly accountable for failing to fully fund even the limited and arbitrary cap on the number of TSO full-time equivalents during this time. TSOs are burdened with growing demands they cannot meet at current staffing levels, and passengers are faced with unnecessarily excessive wait times.

Emergency legislation to fund the hiring of 6,000 full-time TSOs would provide the staffing necessary to appropriately staff airport checkpoints, and begin to permanently replace the comparable number of TSOs who have left TSA over the last 5 years. TSA must also address the second-class status of the TSO workforce. Without the title 5 rights provided to most other federal workers, including uniformed DHS officers, TSA will continue to hemorrhage TSOs and will never have the established, experienced, well trained screening workforce demanded by the public following the terrible events of September 11, 2001. Importantly, emergency legislation will not have starved one part of homeland security to fund another.

AFGE advocates for the federal workers we represent as well as the public they serve. The evidence is clear that TSA's staffing decisions and a lack of funding from Congress have created the untenable delays at checkpoint. We urge the Appropriations Committee to propose emergency legislation to fully staff our nation's airport checkpoints.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. David Cox, Sr.", written in a cursive style.

J. David Cox, Sr.
AFGE National President